



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE RNC

**A GUIDE FOR VISITING FREEDOM FIGHTERS**



As many readers will have heard, Donald Trump will be accepting the Republican nomination for president at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, July 18th - 21st. Anarchists, radicals, and antifascists of all stripes have been wondering for months now what is going on in Cleveland and how they can best plug in to organized resistance. This zine is an attempt to address that question.

The RNC has been designated as a National Special Security Event, meaning that the federal government assumes control over event security and logistics. Previous NSSEs include Democratic and Republican conventions, the 2009 G20 summit in Pittsburgh, and the pope's recent visit to the Philadelphia. NSSEs essentially turn the host city into a police state for the duration of the event. Cops in riot gear swarm the vicinity of the convention, snipers are stationed on rooftops, helicopters patrol the skies, and barriers topped with barbed wire line the security perimeter. Police often conduct bag searches on public transportation and stop, harass, and possibly arrest anyone who looks like a protester. The corporate media goes out of their way to demonize protesters, and protest organizers are often subjected to infiltration and house raids leading up to the event. This approach to protest policing is known as the Miami Model, after the 2003 protests in Miami against the Free Trade Area of the Americas trade agreement.

The Cleveland cops' usual MO fits right in with the Miami Model. The Cleveland Division of Police has a long history of brutality and racism, and is currently operating under a consent decree with the US Department of Justice. The police murders of Tamir Rice, Malissa Williams, and Timothy Russell are the best known recent examples in a longstanding pattern of violence and impunity by the CDP. During many of the protests following these murders the CDP exercised strategic restraint,

**Handy links** - check these often for further updates:

Rust Belt Medics: <https://www.facebook.com/rustbeltmedics/>

Ohio NLG LO Trainings: <https://ohionlg.com/legal-observing/>

Ohio NLG updates: <https://twitter.com/ohionlg>

Donate to the legal support fund: <https://tinyurl.com/rnclegal>

**JAIL SUPPORT HOTLINE - 216-505-0654**

June 25 from 1:30pm-3pm at CSU Law School, room 207  
(1801 Euclid Ave, Cleveland, OH 44115

July 9 from 1:30-3pm at Carnegie West Public Library,  
conference room 1900 Fulton Ave. Cleveland, OH 44113

Street medic training at Case Western Reserve School of  
Medicine, 2109 Adelbert Rd, Cleveland, OH 44106, Robbins  
Building E301. There is a 20 hour training and an eight hour  
bridge training for medical professionals.

#### DATES

\*20-Hour Street Medic Training

Friday, July 8th: 4-9 PM

Saturday, July 9th: 9 AM-6 PM

Sunday, July 10th: 9 AM-6 PM

wary of igniting the kinds of riots that were seen in Ferguson and Baltimore. This changed in May of last year when the CDP kettled and arrested 71 people protesting the acquittal of Michael Brelo, one of the cops who murdered Williams and Russell. By some measures this move backfired on the police. Nearly all charges were dropped or settled on terms favorable to the defendants. The ACLU filed a lawsuit against the city on behalf of four protesters for civil rights violations. The city settled the suit by agreeing to constitutionally acceptable mass arrest and dispersal order procedures for future protests, and around the same time clarified their permitting regulations for protests. The new regulations allow spontaneous flash-mob style actions with no permit. (Although you technically have to call the CDP 8 hours before going out on the streets.)

It is unclear at this point whether kettling and mass arrests represent a preview of the Cleveland cops' RNC strategy, or a mistake they would prefer not to repeat. Local politicians are under pressure, and Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Timothy McGinty lost his reelection bid in the primary and is a lame duck. There is a tremendous anger against the police all over the city. On the other hand, the Secret Service is in charge of security at NSSEs, and both they and the Cleveland rank and file cops are likely to have little sympathy for the difficulties of local politicians. The city has also obtained a million dollar insurance policy against RNC-related lawsuits, further reducing their incentive to restrain their natural impulses.

Cleveland courts will be prepared to run around the clock during the convention, with the aim of processing up to 1,000 arrestees a day. 200 jail cells have been reserved for convention protesters at the Cuyahoga County Jail, and similar agreements have been made with Geauga County and the state of Ohio. In addition the local "workhouse" and the disused

Aviation High School, both used during the Brelo protests, will be available. This is in contrast to the 2008 RNC in St. Paul, where the local court was brought to its knees by "only" 400 arrests on the first day. It seems likely that this capacity will be used. Mass arrests serve multiple purposes. Locking protesters up to keep them off the streets, justifying the oppressive security measures, discouraging future protests, and "taking attendance" - arresting protesters just to get their names into the system - are just some of the benefits to the cops from arresting every protester they can get their hands on.

A new wrinkle at this RNC will be the thousands of Trump supporters who are expected to flood Cleveland. Since their candidate claimed a majority of delegates in the primaries, the convention will not be contested, potentially reducing the number of Trumpists in the city. However, those who do show up will have more time on their hands to attack people of color and protesters, something Trump himself has encouraged during his campaign. At least one group of Trump followers has applied for a permit to march at the convention (as has the Westboro Baptist Church). Trump has the support of many white supremacists, such as David Duke and the KKK, and is also the favorite candidate of the so-called alt-right movement, which includes neoreactionaries, men's rights activists, and outright rape advocates like Roosh V. This motley collection of jagoffs will be invading Cleveland with the tacit backing of the police, who Trump has called "the most mistreated people in this country".

In addition to the march for Trump, a dozen liberal groups have applied for permits for marches and other actions. As of late May, none had been granted. The suspicion among the liberals is that the city is dragging its heels for as long as possible in an attempt to reduce turnout, counting on liberal activists'

duration of the convention, and not quite all of them are subletting their homes to delegates.

**Transportation:** Getting around Cleveland will be difficult because of traffic disruptions caused by the various security perimeters. Public transportation, already slow, expensive, and uncertain, will get even worse. Parking will be tighter than usual also. Anybody coming to Cleveland is encouraged to bring a bicycle, ideally a shitty one that you won't miss if the cops take it. Medics and legal observers in particular will need bikes to get to trouble spots quickly.

**What you can do:** Throw a few extra bikes together and bring them to Cleveland, preferably a day or two early. They don't have to be great quality, but try to make sure they are in decent working order. There should be places to leave them off by then, stay tuned...

### **Upcoming trainings and other events of interest**

Know your rights, 2016 RNC edition: June 28, 7 to 8:30 at the Thomas Merton Center, 5129 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA

Lets Crash the Convention Action Training: June 25, 1:00 PM at Babyland, 3577 Bigelow Blvd. Pittsburgh, PA

Legal observer trainings:

June 11 from 1:30-3pm at Carnegie West Public Library (1900 Fulton Ave. Cleveland, OH 44113

June 18 from 1:30pm-3pm at CWRU Law School, room TBD (11075 East Blvd, Cleveland, OH 44106

come in handy after the convention in many places.

- Show up and help hold down the jail hot line. Folks who get arrested will be calling in with information and requests for solidarity, and it really sucks when nobody is available to pick up the phone... Training for this role will be available in Cleveland. Can also include processing intake and outtake forms, and court observing to track cases.

**Medical:** Rust Belt Medics are training new medics and collecting supplies. They have a medic house lined up, so medics at least will have a place to stay.

**What you can do:**

- Raise money for supplies. Drug store gift cards work too.
- Show up as an action medic. This requires a 20 hour training, so it's a little more involved than legal observing, but this is another skill likely to come in handy long after the RNC. At least one more training is planned for Cleveland before the convention, and there may be others around the Midwest. Check the Rust Belt Medic Facebook page for updates.

**Housing and convergence space:** Housing will be insanely tight in Cleveland during the convention. Every hotel, motel, AirBNB room, and bed and breakfast for miles around is booked solid. A UCC church is being made available for mass housing for protesters and convergence, but keep in mind that under the Miami Model these places tend to get raided by the cops.

**What you can do:** Hit up everyone you know in Cleveland for places to crash. A lot of locals are skipping town for the

reluctance to to show up for unpermitted actions. Local radicals consider it more likely that the Cleveland city bureaucracy is simply too incompetent and disorganized to do anything quickly. The conspiracy theory got a boost when the city released the parade rules for the convention, which mandate a single march route mostly on a bridge, a one hour time limit, and a three to five hour window for all marches for each day of the convention. All previous applications must be refiled to conform to the new procedures, creating an even longer delay in granting permits. The Ohio ACLU has sued the city in an attempt to loosen these restrictions.

The cops however, are apparently doing their best to confirm the incompetence hypothesis. With nearly two years lead time and a \$50 million federal grant for equipment and reinforcements, the CDP is only now receiving essential equipment such as armor, gas masks, and even batons, giving them limited time to train with the new gear. And the suits only come in two sizes, so some officers will not have gear that fits. They won't be wearing body cameras because they can't figure out how to attach them to the riot suits (yes, really!). The CDP are also having trouble lining up outside cops to supplement their own inadequate numbers. This is not unusual for NSSEs in smaller cities that have to bring in outside cops to bolster local forces. Pittsburgh at the 2009 G20 and St.Paul, MN at the 2008 RNC both went down to the wire, but ended up getting the help they needed at the last minute. Even given this history however, there is some cause for optimism this time around. So far, Cincinnati, OH and Greensboro, NC have reneged on their commitments to send officers, both citing Cleveland's lack of preparation for the convention as justification. Police in Chicago and Seattle have reportedly made similar decisions. The CDP claims to be near their numerical target for reinforcements, but if larger, better equipped departments are dropping out, the

slack will have to be taken up by smaller forces that don't necessarily have their own riot gear, exacerbating the equipment problems.

Information about the inner hard security perimeter has not been released yet, and probably won't be until a few days before the convention. However a map of the so-called event zone, a softer outer security zone, has been released. Security restrictions there will be particularly ridiculous. Any items that might be useful to militant protesters are banned within the event zone, including non-plastic water bottles, locks, camping equipment, lumber, and gas masks. That last one is a good indication that the cops are planning to use tear gas. Cleveland insiders are indicating that several inner hard security areas are planned within the event zone, and one outside the event zone near Case Western Reserve University.

Unlike at many previous NSSEs there are no explicitly radical actions planned. Nothing like the protests at the 2008 RNC or 2009 G20 meetings is in the works. Local anarchists have concluded that the potential benefit from a summit demo is not worth jeopardizing ongoing projects and relationships or risking serious felony charges. This does NOT mean that there won't be anything for anarchists to do. For starters, just because no militant protests are being planned doesn't mean that none will occur spontaneously. Trump's campaign appearances have been greeted with fierce protests across the country, on as little as two days notice, even when he only stays a few hours. Over a four day period, in a city already on edge, with Trump supporters wreaking havoc with impunity, tempers are bound to flare. Even just showing up in Cleveland and waiting for something to kick off would be a viable strategy.

There will be plenty of ways to keep busy while waiting, too.

Legal and medical support are being undertaken by the Ohio Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, Cleveland Action, and Rust Belt Medics. They're going to need a lot of help. The volatile nature of this RNC means that legal observers and medics will often have to be dispatched to trouble spots on the fly, as well as being available for scheduled permitted actions. The NLG estimates at least 100 trained legal observers will be needed. Volunteers will also be needed to staff the legal support hot line and the jail vigil. The Rust Belt Medics collective is busy training action medics to give first aid to wounded protesters. They too need more volunteers, and money for medical supplies.

As of early June, logistical preparations look something like this:

**Legal:** The jail hot line will be run out of an office leased by the NLG. Legal observer and know-your-rights trainings are being held regularly in Cleveland by the NLG, and calls for LOs have been sent out to NLG chapters across the country. Cleveland Action is accepting donations to the bail fund, and small IT collectives are working feverishly on a secure file transfer and storage infrastructure to keep LO notes and arrestee information out of the wrong hands.

**What you can do:**

- Raise money for the legal support and bail funds. Mass arrests are a very common occurrence at convention protests, and this one seems unlikely to be different.
- Show up and legal observe. You will need to be trained for this one. There will be multiple LO trainings in Cleveland leading up to the convention, or you might try getting your local NLG chapter to hold one in your town. This knowledge will